

# Keeping it real

## Baker pays sweet homage to local harvest



Kira O'Donnell Babich and her husband and business partner, Fred Babich, offer pies packed with local produce.

Kira O'Donnell Babich, owner and baker at Real Pie Co. in Sacramento, fell in love with baking as a child, making pies with her grandmother at her Humboldt County farm. These days, she shares that love by working with local farmers to create seasonally inspired, handcrafted pastries that celebrate the region's agricultural bounty. Sweet and savory treats featured in the cozy pie shop she's created with her husband, Fred, include pies and cobblers as well as cakes, galettes and tarts.

**What inspires you as a baker?** Seasonal, local produce. I'm excited each week as I create our menu and contemplate how we can best showcase the seasonal fruit we have at our shop.

**What are some of your summer offerings featuring local produce?** Summer is a dizzying, busy, wonderful time at our pie shop. In early summer, we work with local rhubarb, cherries and apricots, and later we move into stone fruit like peaches, nectarines and plums, as well as an array of berries.

**How do your customers react to your handmade pies?** We have many people tell us that they haven't enjoyed pies "like this" since they had their grandmother's pies. This is the ultimate, most touching, humbling compliment a baker can receive. People often associate pies with family and love, so if the pies we bake facilitate a connection to someone's past in a way that nourishes them, we feel very honored.

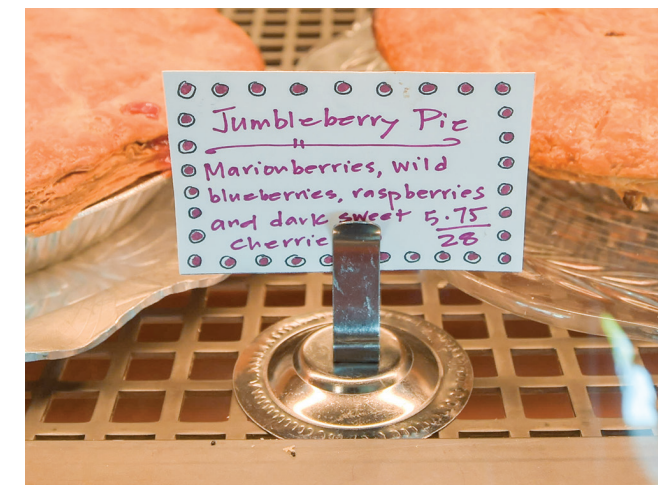
**What are some customer favorites—both sweet and savory?** Our chicken pot pie is a perennial favorite. We make our own stock and gravy, brine the chicken breast and oven-roast the vegetables. Sweet favorites change season to season. They include peach pie, jumbleberry pie (a mixture of blackberries, raspberries, cherries and wild blueberries), shaker Meyer lemon pie, apple galette, rhubarb-raspberry pie and our bourbon walnut pie. Our best-selling cream pie is the butterscotch banana cream pie.

**Why do you work with small, family farms?** I've been an enthusiastic supporter and admirer of small farms for many years. I worked with the statewide UC Small Farm program and also founded the local chapter of Slow Food, and I have profound respect for the people who choose to work the land and devote their lives to producing food for their communities. Our local farms are a precious resource that must be recognized, honored and appreciated.

**What are some of the rewards of being a baker?** I find the craft of baking very grounding and fulfilling. Some of my happiest moments have been when a farmer visits the shop on a day we're offering a menu item that showcases their produce. We share a moment of gratitude and wonder over what they've grown and how it's being appreciated by our customers in a new, sweet form. It's difficult to express the full-circle, shared satisfaction of that experience, but it is very rewarding.

### MORE ONLINE

Watch Kira O'Donnell Babich describe why she loves making pie, discover "milkshake nirvana" and more at [www.californiabountiful.com](http://www.californiabountiful.com).



Cherry and mixed berry pies, above, and tangerine tartlets, below, are some of the seasonally inspired pastries on the menu at Real Pie Co. Pies are crafted from handmade, all-butter crusts and local ingredients as much as possible.

